NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6073 AUGUST 10, 1978
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AFTER THE WORLD YOUTH FESTIVAL

ANNCR:

THE ELEVENTH INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL ENDED THIS WEEK IN HAVANA. IT WAS MOSTLY AN EXERCISE IN COMMUNIST RHETORIC AND PROPAGANDA. VOA'S CLAUDIO ESKENAZI EXAMINES THE FESTIVAL'S HISTORY AND HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

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COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED WORLD YOUTH FESTIVALS HAVE BEEN HELD PERIODICALLY SINCE THE FIRST ONE WAS CONVENED IN PRAGUE IN 1974. PREPARATIONS FOR THE FESTIVALS ARE OSTENSIBLY SPONSORED BY AN INTERNATIONAL PREPARATORY COMMITTEE, BUT ARE ACTUALLY MANAGED BY THE SOVIET-DOMINATED WORLD FEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC YOUTH, TOGETHER WITH THE COMMUNIST-INSPIRED INTERNATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS.

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS IN MOST COUNTRIES IS IN THE HANDS OF NATIONAL YOUTH COMMITTEES CONTROLLED BY THE COMMUNIST PARTY. IN THE PAST, THE ORGANIZERS HAVE ATTEMPTED TO DISGUISE THE POLITICAL OBJECTIVES OF THESE YOUTH FESTIVALS BY HOLDING THEM IN NEUTRAL COUNTRIES SUCH AS AUSTRIA AND FINLAND. BUT THE NEED TO MAINTAIN COMPLETE POLITICAL CONTROL OVER THE DELIBERATIONS IS ONE OF THE MAJOR REASONS MOST OF THESE EVENTS HAVE BEEN STAGED IN SOVIET-BLOC CAPITALS.

THIS YEAR -- FOR THE FIRST TIME -- THE YOUTH FESTIVAL WAS HELD IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY -- CUBA. CONSEQUENTLY THE PROBLEMS OF THE THIRD WORLD DOMINATED THE HAVANA GATHERING. REFLECTING CUBA'S DEEP INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA AND ITS SEARCH FOR JUSTIFICATION, PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS AND PRIVATE TALKS WERE LARGELY DEVOTED TO ANGOLA, ETHIOPIA AND SOUTHERN AFRICA.

AS EXPECTED, THE CASTRO GOVERNMENT USED THE YOUTH GATHERING TO UNLEASH A PROPAGANDA OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE UNITED STATES, WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY. AMONG ITS ALLEGED CRIMES, THE C-I-A WAS ACCUSED OF PLOTTING TO INVOLVE HAVANA IN U.S. PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S ASSASSINATION. AND IN A THEATRICAL SPECTACLE SEVERAL SO-CALLED "DOUBLE AGENTS" OF THE C.I.A. WERE PARADED BEFORE THE FESTIVAL'S PARTICIPANTS.

TRUE TO PAST EXPERIENCE, THERE WAS LITTLE ROOM FOR DISSENT AT THE HAVANA YOUTH FESTIVAL. MOST DELEGATES FROM AFRICA, ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA WERE STAUNCHLY PRO-CUBAN AND PRO-SOVIET. HOWEVER, SEVERAL WEST EUROPEAN YOUTH GROUPS DID MANAGE TO RAISE THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE TRIALS OF SOVIET DISSIDENTS. THE ITALIAN DELEGATION CAUSED THE MOST CONTROVERSY NOT ONLY BY BRINGING UP THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, BUT ALSO BY EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE ERITREAN SECESSIONIST MOVEMENT WHICH IS CURRENTLY FIGHTING CUBAN-BACKED ETHIOPIAN FORCES.

THE U.S. DELEGATION AT THE HAVANA YOUTH FESTIVAL WAS ONE OF THE LARGEST OF THE 145 NATIONS REPRESENTED. THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY FOUR HUNDRED AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVES -- MOST OF WHOM WERE PUERTO RICANS, BLACKS INDIANS, AND MEXICAN-AMERICANS. ALTHOUGH THE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN HAVANA AND WASHINGTON HAS BEEN STRAINED IN THE LAST MONTHS BECAUSE OF INCREASED CUBAN INTERVENTION IN AFRICA, THE MERE PRESENCE OF SO MANY YOUNG AMERICANS IN THE STREETS OF HAVANA DID NOT ESCAPE THE NOTICE OF OBSERVERS. BUT NO MATTER WHO ATTENDED, THE PURPOSE OF THIS YEAR'S FESTIVAL REMAINED THE SAME AS ALL ITS PREDECESSORS -- AN EXERCISE IN PROPAGANDA.

WJL/PY